Rights in Practice

How activism changed laws and everyday choices

SS24.US2.14b "Evaluate the social and political significance of the women's rights movement from the 1960s to the 1980s on the lives of women in the United States."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two changes that affected women's opportunities, circle one limit on those changes, and number the details you think are most important. Use your marks to judge how much the movement changed women's lives.

Changing the Rules, Changing Lives

1 In 1966, a woman reading a newspaper might see separate job ads for men and women. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 had banned sex discrimination in employment, but a law did not instantly change hiring. That year, activists founded the National Organization for Women (NOW) to press federal officials to enforce the ban. Women also filed complaints and challenged unequal treatment at work. These efforts made job discrimination a public issue rather than a private disappointment. Still, employers could resist, and women with low wages or few legal resources often found it harder to fight back.

2 Schools became another arena. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibited sex discrimination in federally funded education programs. A student who wanted to join a school team or enter a training program could now point to a federal rule when she faced exclusion. Title IX did not create equal opportunities overnight; schools had to change policies, and enforcement took time. Yet the law expanded what girls and women could reasonably demand from educational institutions. More access to courses and sports could shape later choices about work, income, and independence.

3 Activists also pushed for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which would have added an explicit constitutional guarantee of equal rights regardless of sex. Congress sent it to the states in 1972, but it did not win enough state ratifications by the 1982 deadline. Opponents argued that the amendment could disrupt family roles, while supporters saw constitutional protection as essential. The campaign drew women into organizing and public debate even without a constitutional victory. By the 1980s, new laws and activism had widened opportunities, but unequal treatment persisted. The movement's gains were real, yet they reached women unevenly.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did NOW's pressure matter even after the 1964 law passed? Explain its effect on the fight for fair employment.

2. How could Title IX affect a student's life beyond school? Use a detail from the passage.

3. How did the ERA campaign have political significance even though the amendment was not ratified by the deadline?

4. Why would it be misleading to say the movement created equal opportunities for all women by the 1980s? Use details from two different paragraphs.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 100 word museum caption answering this question: Were the movement's biggest gains changes in rules or changes in daily possibilities? Make a claim, connect evidence from two different arenas in the passage, and explain one limit of those gains.

ANSWER KEY

Rights in Practice

GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.14b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two changes that affected women's opportunities, circle one limit on those changes, and number the details you think are most important. Use your marks to judge how much the movement changed women's lives. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did NOW's pressure matter even after the 1964 law passed? Explain its effect on the fight for fair employment.	**The law did not immediately change hiring. NOW pressed officials to enforce it, helping make job discrimination a public issue that women could challenge.**
2	How could Title IX affect a student's life beyond school? Use a detail from the passage.	**Access to courses or sports could expand a student's later choices about work, income, or independence.**
3	How did the ERA campaign have political significance even though the amendment was not ratified by the deadline?	**It drew women into organizing and public debate over whether equal rights should be guaranteed by the Constitution.**
4	Why would it be misleading to say the movement created equal opportunities for all women by the 1980s? Use details from two different paragraphs.	**Women with low wages or few legal resources had more difficulty fighting job discrimination, and schools needed time to change policies and enforce Title IX.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The movement's biggest gains were changes in daily possibilities, although new rules helped make them possible. At work, women could challenge unfair hiring instead of treating rejection as a private failure. In schools, Title IX gave students a basis to demand access to courses and sports, which could influence later careers. These changes reached beyond the text of a law into choices about work and education. Still, access was uneven: women with low wages or few legal resources often had a harder time challenging discrimination.

Accept either position in the museum caption if the student supports it with evidence from two arenas and explains a limit. Responses should distinguish the passage's evidence of change from claims that equality was complete.